



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 2/6//18

CONTACT: Tiffany Pippin, Adult Education Manager, Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning
Phone: 303.863.0188, x304 tpippin@springinstitute.org

Spring Institute Applauds State Senate Committee Decision to Advance Bill Offering In-State Tuition to Refugees, Military Interpreters

Denver, CO—Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning joined with the Skills2Compete Coalition of Colorado and more than a dozen witnesses at Monday’s hearing before the Colorado Senate Committee on State, Veterans and Military Affairs in supporting the passage of SB-87, which would grant immediate eligibility to in-state tuition to all refugees and special immigrant visa holders who are resettled in Colorado.

Currently all refugees resettled in Colorado, including Afghanis and Iraqis who served U.S. forces in the Afghan and Iraq wars, are required a full year before they can access in-state tuition at institutions of higher learning. This bill recognizes the special circumstances behind their resettlement in Colorado and would remove an important barrier preventing many such individuals from gaining the education they need to embark on a path of self-sufficiency and regain their lives.

“Spring Institute and the Skills2Compete Coalition call on state lawmakers to support this bill because it will benefit high-skilled refugees who are anxious to return to their careers and contribute to the community,” stated Tiffany Pippin, Adult Education Manager at Spring Institute. “It will benefit sectors such as healthcare that are seeking high-skilled individuals like our refugee participants and neighbors, and it will benefit higher education institutions with the in-state tuition that newly arrived refugees can contribute.”

(Full text of Spring Institute’s testimony below.)

- ### -

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for giving me the time to provide testimony in support of SB-87.

My name is Tiffany Pippin, and I manage an Adult Education Program at Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, a nonprofit that has been supporting immigrants and refugees in the Denver Metro Area for over 39 years. I'm testifying on behalf of Spring Institute and the Skills2Compete Coalition, a multi-sector coalition that includes representatives from adult education, post-secondary education, workforce development, business, and the advocacy arena, and works to address the skills gap for workers by working to provide better access to training and educational opportunities for all adults in Colorado.

We are certain that this bill would be very beneficial for not only individuals who could take advantage of it, but also for employers and the Colorado community as a whole. At Spring Institute, we often work with refugees who would greatly benefit from being able to immediately access in-state tuition upon resettlement. Many are doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals who come to the U.S. with advanced skills, but they are forced to work in low-skilled jobs that don't align with their expertise because they come with credentials or education that will not transfer in the U.S. These individuals are motivated and willing to obtain more post-secondary education in the U.S. upon resettlement. However, not being able to access in-state tuition for a year puts a hold on these individuals who cannot bear the cost of out-of-state tuition. This bill would prevent skilled workers from being penalized in a Colorado economy that has a shortage of healthcare workers and other high-skilled positions that could be filled more quickly. We've seen this situation happen to several of the participants that we advise through our Colorado Welcome Back Program, which helps internationally trained medical professionals get back into their careers. We support this bill because it will remove an unnecessary barrier for refugee individuals who've already encountered significant barriers and want to contribute to Colorado's workforce.

Both Spring Institute and the Skills2Compete Coalition support this bill because it will benefit high-skilled refugees who are anxious to return to their careers and contribute to the community, it will benefit sectors such as healthcare that are seeking high-skilled individuals like our refugee participants and neighbors, and it will benefit higher education institutions with the in-state tuition that newly arrived refugees can contribute.

Thank you for your time,

Tiffany Pippin